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Indian tanker Jag Vasant, after clearing the Strait of Hormuz, is seen anchored at the LPG discharge terminal in Mumbai on Wednesday | P11

PM reviews steps to safeguard citizens

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday chaired the meeting of Cabinet Committee on Security to review India's preparedness amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, directing officials that "all efforts must be made to safeguard citizens from the impact of this conflict." The second such review in recent days held at 7 Lok Kalyan Marg focused on mitigating disruptions across key sectors including energy, agriculture, shipping, aviation, logistics and MSMEs.

The government assessed supply chains and explored contingency measures to ensure stability in essential commodities and services. Supply diversification for LPG and LNG, fuel duty reduction and power sector measures were reviewed to ensure stability of essential supplies.

Cabinet Secretary T V Somanathan briefed the meeting about the action taken to ensure supply of petroleum products, particularly LNG/LPG, and sufficient power availability. Measures such as exempting certain gas-based power plants from pooling mechanisms and increasing coal supplies to thermal stations were reviewed to ensure uninterrupted electricity. The government noted that "enough coal stock exists" to meet power needs in the coming months.

On the agriculture front, the PM reviewed fertilizer availability. Efforts are underway to maintain urea production and coordinate imports of DAP and NPK fertilizers. States have been asked to intensify monitoring and take action against diversion and black-marketing.

Trump says war to end in 3 wks, hints NATO exit

AGENCIES
@ Washington, London, Tel Aviv

PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Wednesday said the US could end its operations in Iran in two-three weeks with or a without a deal. However, a third US aircraft carrier, USS George H W Bush, set sail for West Asia on Tuesday. Trump is expected to address the nation on Wednesday night.

The US president sharply escalated his confrontation with Europe over the war, saying he is strongly considering pulling his country out of NATO. "Oh yes, I would say it's (US exit from NATO) beyond reconsideration," he told a reporter at a White House briefing.

In a further sign of stress on the transatlantic alliance, UK PM Keir Starmer said Britain needed to forge a "closer partnership" with the EU on defence, security and the economy. He vowed not to let the UK get dragged into the war.

Meanwhile, Trump claimed Iran's president has asked for a ceasefire. However, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson dismissed the remarks as "false and baseless". P12

Special session for women's quota

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

WITH an eye on the upcoming assembly polls, the Centre may convene a special session of Parliament from April 16-18 to bring a bill to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816 so that 273 of them could be reserved for women in Lok Sabha, sources said.

While the Budget Session is scheduled to conclude on Thursday, the government may prorogue it and convene a 'special session' ahead of the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu on April 23, and West Bengal polls on April 23 and 29.

"The House will not be adjourned sine die but will be ad-

journing with the announcement that it will meet again on a specific date. We will meet again this month," said a source, indicating the third week of April.

The government recently proposed an early delimitation exercise to fast-track the implementation of the Women's Reservation Act. The proposed changes reportedly include linking the Act's implementation based on the 2011 Census for a quicker rollout and potentially increasing the number of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats by 50% on a proportional basis.

The Opposition has demand-

ed an all-party meeting to discuss the roadmap. The Congress has also opposed the move to raise the size of the Lok Sabha by 50% saying such a move would "disadvantage" smaller states in the South, Northeast, and West. The provision to provide 33% reservation to women in Lok Sabha and assemblies was brought by amending the Constitution in 2023, but it will come into effect after the completion of the delimitation exercise.

The reservation will also be done on a "vertical basis" with seats allocated for SCs and STs. The redrawing of constituencies will be done on the basis of

the 2011 census rather than the proposed 2027 census.

A similar exercise will be carried out for state assemblies where seats will be reserved on a pro-rata basis. A Constitution amendment bill will tweak the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, commonly known as women's reservation law; another bill will amend the Delimitation Act.

Once approved by Parliament, the proposed laws will come into force on March 31, 2029 and will help reserve seats for women in the next Lok Sabha elections and assembly elections in Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Andhra Pradesh.



DAY 33
WAR WATCH
COSTLY FUEL

25%

Price hike cap on aviation turbine fuel on domestic routes announced to prevent steep rise in airfares, though ATF rates have more than doubled to ₹2.07 lakh due to West Asia crisis

₹2 per L

Jump in XP95, Power95, and Speed fuels

₹51

More for 5 kg mini LPG cylinder



CURTAINS DOWN

People gather near Dharmaraya Swamy Temple for the grand Karaga procession on the final day of the festival in Bengaluru on Wednesday night | NAGARAJA GADEKAL | P2

HC to state: File FIR against IAS officer Rohini Sindhuri

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka High Court directed the state government to accord approval within four weeks under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act for registration of a First Information Report (FIR) against IAS officer Rohini Sindhuri D and the then Managing Director of Karnataka Handloom Development Corporation for investigation by the Lokayukta police into alleged corruption and consequent loss to the state exchequer in the procure-

ment of eco-friendly cloth bags by her as Deputy Commissioner of Mysuru.

The court said a cloth bag available in the open market at Rs 13 per unit was sought to be procured at Rs 52, pursuant to a decision attributed to the DC.

Further, funds earmarked for welfare schemes within urban local bodies and gram panchayats of the district were diverted to procure the bags. The approval sought under Section 17A pertains to a case which, at least prima facie, discloses elements of corruption, the court said. P5



Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

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MAGNETIC
MAHARASHTRA

Devendra Fadnavis
Chief Minister

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- Seaports**
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Infrastructure is in full swing at complete stage which includes:

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Chief Minister

Eknath Shinde
Deputy Chief Minister

Sunetra Ajit Pawar
Deputy Chief Minister

Uday Samant
Minister of Industries

Indranil Naik
Minister of State for Industries

MAHARASHTRA INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
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